

**CLAIMS**

What is claimed is:

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1. A method for managing objects in a data processing system, the method comprising:

creating a skeleton cache; and

10 storing a first object in the skeleton cache, wherein a skeleton cache stores skeleton objects and/or full objects, wherein a full object is an object in which each attribute within the full object has a data value, wherein a skeleton  
15 object is an object in which at least one attribute within the skeleton object is dataless, and wherein a skeleton object has a corresponding full object that is stored without the skeleton cache but within the data processing system.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

20 retrieving a skeleton definition associated with the first object, wherein a skeleton definition is associated with an first object's type, wherein a skeleton definition indicates whether an attribute within the first object is a skeleton attribute, and wherein a skeleton attribute is a  
25 dataless attribute.

3. The method of claim 2 further comprising:

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fetching a full object;
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    generating a skeleton object corresponding to the
    fetched full object;

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5       determining whether a first attribute in the fetched  
full object is a full attribute or a skeleton attribute in  
accordance with the fetched full object's skeleton  
definition;

in response to a determination that the first attribute  
10 is a full attribute, copying the first attribute's data  
value from the fetched full object into the corresponding  
skeleton object; and

storing the corresponding skeleton object in the skeleton cache.

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4. The method of claim 2 further comprising:

requesting a value of a second attribute of a second object; and

determining whether the second object resides in the  
20 skeleton cache as a full object or as a skeleton object.

5. The method of claim 4 further comprising:

in response to a determination that the second object resides in the skeleton cache as a full object, retrieving the requested value of the second attribute of the second object from the second object residing in the skeleton cache.

6. The method of claim 4 further comprising:

30           in response to a determination that the second object  
resides in the skeleton cache as a skeleton object,  
determining whether the second attribute in the second  
object is a full attribute or a skeleton attribute.

7. The method of claim 6 further comprising:

in response to a determination that the second attribute is a full attribute, retrieving the requested value of the second attribute of the second object from the second object residing in the skeleton cache.

8. The method of claim 6 further comprising:

in response to a determination that the second attribute is a skeleton attribute, retrieving the requested value of the second attribute of the second object from a corresponding full object for the second object stored within the data processing system.

15 9. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

determining whether to create a skeleton cache in accordance with a skeleton policy, wherein the skeleton policy comprises one or more configurable conditions for determining whether to create a skeleton cache.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein a configurable condition is based upon an identity of a user of the data processing system.

25 11. The method of claim 9 wherein a configurable condition  
is based upon a determination of membership of a user of the  
data processing system within a class of users.

12. The method of claim 9 wherein a configurable condition  
30 is based upon a determination of membership of a device for  
storing the skeleton cache within a class of devices.

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19. An apparatus for managing objects in a data processing system, the apparatus comprising:

means for creating a skeleton cache; and

means for storing a first object in the skeleton cache,

5 wherein a skeleton cache stores skeleton objects and/or full objects, wherein a full object is an object in which each attribute within the full object has a data value, wherein a skeleton object is an object in which at least one attribute within the skeleton object is dataless, and wherein a  
10 skeleton object has a corresponding full object that is stored without the skeleton cache but within the data processing system.

20. The apparatus of claim 19 further comprising:

15 means for retrieving a skeleton definition associated with the first object, wherein a skeleton definition is associated with an first object's type, wherein a skeleton definition indicates whether an attribute within the first object is a skeleton attribute, and wherein a skeleton  
20 attribute is a dataless attribute.

21. The apparatus of claim 20 further comprising:

means for fetching a full object;

25 means for generating a skeleton object corresponding to the fetched full object;

means for determining whether a first attribute in the fetched full object is a full attribute or a skeleton attribute in accordance with the fetched full object's skeleton definition;

30 means for copying the first attribute's data value from the fetched full object into the corresponding skeleton object in response to a determination that the first attribute is a full attribute; and

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means for storing the corresponding skeleton object in the skeleton cache.

22. The apparatus of claim 20 further comprising:

5 means for requesting a value of a second attribute of a second object; and

means for determining whether the second object resides in the skeleton cache as a full object or as a skeleton object.

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23. The apparatus of claim 22 further comprising:

means for retrieving the requested value of the second attribute of the second object from the second object residing in the skeleton cache in response to a

15 determination that the second object resides in the skeleton cache as a full object.

24. The apparatus of claim 22 further comprising:

20 means for determining whether the second attribute in the second object is a full attribute or a skeleton attribute in response to a determination that the second object resides in the skeleton cache as a skeleton object.

25. The apparatus of claim 24 further comprising:

25 means for retrieving the requested value of the second attribute of the second object from the second object residing in the skeleton cache in response to a determination that the second attribute is a full attribute.

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26. The apparatus of claim 24 further comprising:

means for retrieving the requested value of the second attribute of the second object from a corresponding full object for the second object stored within the data processing system in response to a determination that the second attribute is a skeleton attribute.

27. The apparatus of claim 19 further comprising:

means for determining whether to create a skeleton cache in accordance with a skeleton policy, wherein the skeleton policy comprises one or more configurable conditions for determining whether to create a skeleton cache.

28. The apparatus of claim 27 wherein a configurable condition is based upon an identity of a user of the data processing system.

29. The apparatus of claim 27 wherein a configurable condition is based upon a determination of membership of a user of the data processing system within a class of users.

30. The apparatus of claim 27 wherein a configurable condition is based upon a determination of membership of a device for storing the skeleton cache within a class of devices.

31. The apparatus of claim 27 wherein a configurable condition is based upon a determination of available memory.

32. The apparatus of claim 27 wherein a configurable condition is based upon a determination of available memory within a device that stores the skeleton cache.

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37. A computer program product on a computer readable medium for managing objects in a data processing system, the computer program product comprising:

instructions for creating a skeleton cache; and

- 5 instructions for storing a first object in the skeleton cache, wherein a skeleton cache stores skeleton objects and/or full objects, wherein a full object is an object in which each attribute within the full object has a data value, wherein a skeleton object is an object in which at least one attribute within the skeleton object is dataless, and wherein a skeleton object has a corresponding full object that is stored without the skeleton cache but within the data processing system.

- 15 38. The computer program product of claim 37 further comprising:

instructions for retrieving a skeleton definition associated with the first object, wherein a skeleton definition is associated with an first object's type,

- 20 wherein a skeleton definition indicates whether an attribute within the first object is a skeleton attribute, and wherein a skeleton attribute is a dataless attribute.

- 25 39. The computer program product of claim 38 further comprising:

instructions for fetching a full object;

instructions for generating a skeleton object corresponding to the fetched full object;

- 30 instructions for determining whether a first attribute in the fetched full object is a full attribute or a skeleton attribute in accordance with the fetched full object's skeleton definition;

